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Devoted to Agriculture, Mechanics, Arts, News, and General Literature

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Select Poetry.

[From Harper's Weekly.]
NOTHING TIME.

The nuts are ripe and the day is fine,
The purple hills in the sunlight shine,
And the brown rills rodden the trembling tops
Of each guarded tree in the hazel copse.
The copse is filled with the happy noise
Of laughing girls and climbing boys,
And the beauteous branches yield their fruit
That heavily drops at each old tree's foot.
Under the bow of the copse crowned hill,
Ribel and I sit silent and still,
And I held in mine her small white hand,
The smallest and whitest in all the land.
Gather your fruit, ye lads above,
And fling the nuts at the girls you love;
The only fruit that to me was dear
I have gathered to-day in the white hand here.

Pictures of Life.

ONLY WORDS.

Two women, a mother and a daughter, sat together, in a small room meagerly furnished. They had on mourning garments; but the gloom of their habiliments was not deeper than the gloom of their faces.

"What are we to do Alice?" said the mother, breaking in upon a long silence. "If we were only back again in dear Westbrook," fell longingly from the daughter's lips.

"Yes, if—but Westbrook lies more than a thousand miles distant. It was a sad day for us, my child, when we left there. We have had nothing but trouble and sorrow, since."

Tears flowed silently over the mother's face.

"If I could only get something to do," said Alice, "how willingly would I work. But no one wants the service I can give."

"We shall start at this rate," spoke out the mother in a wild kind of way, as if fear had grown suddenly desperate.

Alice did not reply, but sat very still, in an abstracted way, like one whose thoughts have grown weary in some fruitless effort.

"I dreamed last night," she said, looking up after a while, "that we were back in Westbrook, and in our old home! How plain I saw every thing! I sat at the window, looking out upon the little garden in front, from which the air came in filled with the odor of flowers; and as I sat there Mr. Fleetwood passed by, just as it used to be; and he stopped and said, 'Good morning Alice,' in that kind way in which he always spoke to me. I cried when I awoke, to find it was only a dream."

"Ah! if there was only a Mr. Fleetwood here!" sighed the poor mother. "Suppose you write to him," suggested Alice, "the thought comes this moment into my mind. I am sure he would help us. You know what an excellent man he is."

"I will do it this very day," replied the mother, with hope, and confidence in her voice. "Isn't it strange that he was not thought of before? Some good spirit gave you the dream, Alice." And the letter was written. It ran as follows:

"EDWARD FLEETWOOD, Esq.:

MY DEAR SIR—I write to you under circumstances of great extremity. Since we left Westbrook for this distant region we have known only trouble. Sick and death have met us on the very threshold of our new home; and death came at last to complete the work of sorrow and disaster. Six months ago my husband died, leaving me with three children and in circumstances of great extremity. How we have managed to live since that time I can hardly tell. We have suffered many privations; but worse things are approaching. We have no friends here. None to help, none to advise, or care for us. Alice—your daughter—has tried to get something to do. She is willing to work at anything to which her strength is equal. But, so far, she has been unsuccessful. What are we to do? It looks as if actual starvation were coming. I write to you—remembering your kindly nature, your warm heart. Oh, sir, can you not help us? It is a voice of the widow and fatherless that cries unto you. Alice dreamed of you last night, and we have taken it as an omen. Forgive me for this freedom; but when imminent danger threatens, we reach out our hands for succor in any direction to which hope

points us. I shall wait in trembling eagerness for your reply.

Yours, in sorrow and hope,

ALICE MAYNARD.

Let us follow this letter to Westbrook, and note the manner in which it is received. We find it in the hands of Mr. Fleetwood, who has read it through, and is sitting with a troubled look on his face.

"There is no help in me," he says at length, folding up the letter and laying it aside. "Poor Mrs. Maynard! Is the day indeed so dark? God knows I would help you if it were in my power. But misfortune has not come to you alone. It has passed my threshold also and the threshold of thousands of others besides. Westbrook has seen some changes since you went away."

"Dreamed of me," he goes on after a pause; "and you have taken the dream as a suggestion of an omen. Alas, my friend! It is not a good omen. Some spirit has mocked you with a delusive dream. There is no help in me. None—none! For I am staggering under my own burdens; I am in fear all the day long lest the evil that threatens my home should fall upon it. May God help and comfort you! I cannot."

Mr. Fleetwood took the letter from a table where he placed it and laid it in a drawer. "Poor Alice Maynard," he sighed, as he shut the drawer and turned away. All day long the thought of that letter troubled him. How could he answer it? What could he say? It was an eager expectant cry for help, but he had none to give. The widow mother had asked him for bread; and how could he offer her mere words in return—cold disappointing words!

For two days that letter remained in the drawer where he had placed it. "It is no use," he would say, as the thought of it now again intruded. "I cannot bring myself to write an answer. Say what I will and the language must seem to her heartless sentences. She cannot understand how greatly things have changed with me since she went out of Westbrook. If she does not hear from me she may think her letter miscarried. She, like the rest of us, is in God's hands, and He will take care of her. We are of more value than the sparrows."

But this could not satisfy Mr. Fleetwood. He had a conscience, and it would not let him omit a plain duty without reproach.

"If you have no money to give, offer her kind and hopeful words," said the inward monitor. "Even a cup of cold water must not be withheld."

Unable to make peace with himself, Mr. Fleetwood at last sat down to answer the widow's letter. He wrote a brief, kind, suggestive note; but after reading it over twice, tore it up, saying as he did so:

It reads like mockery. She asked me for bread and it seems like giving her a stone.

Then he tried it again, but not much more to his satisfaction. This answer he was also about destroying, when he checked himself with the words:

"I might write a dozen letters and the last would read no better than the first. Let this one go!"

And he folded, sealed and directed it. The next mail that left Westbrook bore it away to its remote destination. Let us return to Mrs. Maynard.

"We should have had an answer from Mr. Fleetwood two days ago Alice." The poor daughter sighed but did not answer.

"What time does the mail from the East arrive, Alice?"

"At four o'clock."

"And it is five now."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Won't you put on your bonnet and step over to the Post Office?"

Alice went but returned, as on the two previous days, with nothing in her hand.

"No letter?" said Mrs. Maynard, as she came in.

"None," was the sadly spoken reply. "Oh why has he not written? If help come not from Mr. Fleetwood, there is no help for us in this world."

Another day in waiting, in which that deferred hope which maketh the heart sick, trembled like the light of a taper flickering in the wind, passed wearily away. At five o'clock Alice was at the Post Office again. And now a letter was placed in her hand, direct-

ed to her mother, and on the envelope she read, with a heart-bound, the word "Westbrook." Not faster than her footsteps was the wind as she ran back home.

"A letter from Westbrook!" she cried out eagerly, as she entered the room where her mother sat anxiously awaiting her.

The hands of Mrs. Maynard shook as she opened and unfolded the long hoped-for answer. It was brief, and its contents fully understood in a few moments. Alice whose eyes were fixed eagerly on her mother while she read in silence, saw her countenance change grown pale, and the look of hopeful expectation died out utterly. Then as the letter dropped from her hands they were held up against her face so as to hide it from view, and she sat with the stillness of one who had been paralyzed. Taking up the letter Alice read:

MY DEAR MADAM—Your letter has troubled me deeply; and the more so, because it finds me wholly unable to give you the help of which you stand so much in need. Since you left Westbrook things have greatly changed with me and many others. I have lost nearly all my property, and find myself in straitened circumstances. It pains me to write this; not so much on my account as on yours, for it will come to you with a chill of disappointment. But you and I and all of us are in the hands and under the care of one who knoweth our wants, and who heareth even the young ravens when they cry. You have a Father in Heaven, dear Madam, and a Father who has not forgotten you. Look to Him and hope to Him. He will not forsake you in this great extremity. The earth is His, and the fullness thereof. All hearts are His, and I am sure He will turn some hearts to you in kindness.

Without a succeeding day. The morning cometh as surely as the evening. Look and trust in God. He has something for all His children to do; something for you to do, and your hands will find the work. It may not be lying all unseem around you.

"It is in my heart to offer deeds instead of words; but I can only give what I possess. May the widow's Husband and orphan's Father succor you in the hour of peril! Your friend in heart,

EDWARD FLEETWOOD."

"He writes kindly," said Alice, as she finished reading the letter; "and there is comfort even in words when they come from the lips of a friend."

"Words do not feed the hungry nor clothe the naked," answered Mrs. Maynard, in some bitterness of tone.

She had scarcely said this when the door of the room in which they were sitting was pushed open, and a boy about ten years old, barefooted and meagerly clad, came in with a pitcher in one hand, and a small basket in the other.

"Mother sent these, Miss Maynard," he said, with a pleasant smile on his face. The pitcher was filled with new milk, and there was a loaf of bread, hot from the oven, in the basket. "She says please accept them."

"Your mother is very kind, Henry," replied Mrs. Maynard. "Tell her that I am very much obliged to her."

"And she's very much obliged to you," said the boy.

"For what, Henry?"

"Don't you know?" And the boy looked at her in a pleased way.

Mrs. Maynard shook her head.

"Don't you remember one day, when I was over here, that you asked me if I could read?"

"I've forgotten."

"We haven't then, mother and I. You asked me if I could read, and I said no. Then you told me I must learn right away; and you got a book and showed me A B C's; making me go over them a good many times, until I knew them all by heart. Then you gave me the book. I have studied it almost every day, and now I can spell in two syllables."

"And this is why your mother sent me such a nice loaf of bread, and a pitcher of new milk?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You can't read yet?"

"No, ma'am."

"Then you must bring your book over, and let me give you another lesson."

"Oh, will you?"—A light like sun-

shine came into the boy's face.

"Yes, Henry, and with pleasure. You may come every day if you will?"

"May I? Oh, that will be good! And Mrs. Maynard—"

Henry checked himself. He evidently wished to go a little farther.

"What is it Henry?" said Mrs. Maynard, encouragingly.

"May I bring Kate along sometimes? She wants to learn so badly. She 'most knows her letters."

"Why yes, Henry. Bring Katy by all means. Alice will teach her."

Henry glanced toward Alice, as if not fully satisfied in regard to her view in this case. But she gave him an assuring smile and word, and the boy ran home with light feet to tell the news.

"What does this mean, Alice?" said Mrs. Maynard, looking at her daughter with a countenance through which a dim light seemed breaking.

"It may be true what Mr. Fleetwood says," replied Alice; "the work that God has for us to do may now be lying all unseem around us."

"This is no mere chance," remarked Mrs. Maynard, in a thoughtful way.

"Don't you remember," said Alice, "how often dear father used to say that there was no such thing as chance? I felt, while reading Mr. Fleetwood's letter, as if it was father who was speaking to us."

Mrs. Maynard shut her eyes and sat very still for many moments; then she opened the letter, which she held in her hand, and read it through slowly.

"It reads different now. I am sorry for Mr. Fleetwood. It is hard, when years lay upon us their long accumulating burdens, to find earthly props suddenly removed. Poor man! It seems as if he ought to have been spared."

ly, and I thank him with grateful feelings. Yes I have a Father in heaven, and I will look up to him in these days of darkness. He will show us the way. Who knows but the path is opened for us?"

"My own thought, mother. There are more than forty children in this town who are growing up in as much ignorance as Henry Auld and his sister. Their parents will not, or can not, send them to school. These children have immortal souls and almost infinite capacities that will be developed for good or evil. They are God's children. Let us care for them, and God will care for us. Let us take the loaf of bread and pitcher of milk as the sign of God's providence toward us. I feel, dear mother that such truth will not be in vain. Mr. Fleetwood's letter has turned the channel of my thoughts in a new direction. May God reward him for all he has said to us in this our time of need, and said so kindly and so wisely."

The daughter's hope and faith flowed into the mother's heart. They were not indolent, self-indulgent women. All they asked was to be shown their work; and now, in their eyes, it seemed to be lying all around them.

On the next day Henry Auld came over with his sister Katy, and received the promised lessons.

"Do you know any other boys and girls who wish to know how to learn to read?" asked Mrs. Maynard as the children were going away.

"O, yes, I know a good many," replied Henry, and then stood waiting to hear what would come next.

"Bring them along when you come to-morrow," said Mrs. Maynard. "It will be as easy to teach half a dozen as two."

"Won't Tom Jones be glad though! she heard Henry say to his sister," as they went out through the gate.

Three months went by, and yet Mr. Fleetwood received no response to the answer which he had given to Mrs. Maynard's imploring letter. He did not remember distinctly what he had written. He only knew that he had sent her more words when she asked for deeds. He never thought of her without a troubled feeling.

"How cold and heartless that letter must have seemed!" he would say to himself sometimes. "Ah, if she really knew how it was with me? If she could see into my breast, poor woman! But she is in the hands of God, and He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

"Oh, will you?"—A light like sun-

At last there came a reply to his words of encouragement and hope, which though flowing warm from his heart, seemed to grow so cold in the utterance. Mrs. Maynard wrote:

MR DEAR SIR:—More than four months ago you wrote to me, 'You have a Father in Heaven, dear Madam, and a Father who has not forgotten you. Look to him, and hope in him.' And you said also, 'He has something for all his children to do; and something for you to do, and your hands will find the work. It may be lying all unseem around you.' My heart blessed you, Sir, for those hopeful, suggestive words. Yes, God had work for me to do—and it was lying, even when I wrote to you in my fear and despair, all around me, though unseen by my dull eyes. Like apples of gold in pictures of silver were your fifty spoken words. I had taught a child his letters, and his poor but grateful mother sent me in return a loaf of bread and a pitcher of milk for my children. Your letter and this offering in God's providence came together. I had the text and illustration side by side. There were many ignorant children in our town, said Alice and I one to the other, and they are God's children. Let us teach more of them, as we taught this one, taking that loaf of bread and offering of milk as a sign that God will provide for us in the work. We did not hesitate, but acted on the suggestion at once. And now we have over thirty poor little children under our care, and we have not wanted for bread. Some of the parents pay us in money, some in provisions, and some do nothing in return. But we take all children who come. Yesterday we had notice from the town council that an appropriation of one hundred dollars a year had been made out of the public funds for the hand of a wise and good Providence appear in all this? Oh, Sir! I cannot too warmly thank you for the wise words of that kind letter. God bless you for having spoken them. Gratefully yours, ALICE MAYNARD.

"Only words," said Mr. Fleetwood, as he folded the letter with moist eyes. "Only words! They seemed such a cold and heartless return for good deeds, asked pleadingly and in tears, that I had to compel myself to write them. Yet see their good fruit! If we cannot do let us speak kindly and hopeful at least. I will not forget the lesson."

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